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Leslie Messer, Executive Director
Marcy Hamburg, Project Assistant

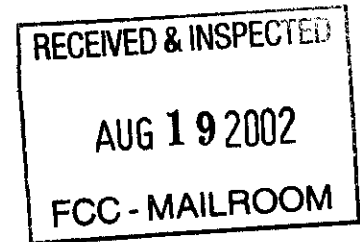
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A Non-Profit Countywide Economic Development Corporation

January 8, 2002

WC DOCKET NO. 02-189

Michael K. Powell, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554



Dear Chairman Powell:

Richland Economic Development continues to work hard to increase the number of good paying jobs in Sidney, Richland County, and NE Montana. We are fortunate to have fertile ground and abundant water to support and nurture agriculture, but we would also like to attract food processors and other manufacturing jobs.

We believe part of our future lies with telecommunications capacity; it will be the only way our rural area can overcome its isolation from major markets.

We are fortunate to be served by two local service providers: Midrivers Communications and Qwest. As advocates for our healthy economic community, we understand what competition can do for prices and services. When Midrivers began offering service, Qwest responded immediately with lower prices and improving packages of services.

We know Qwest is applying for approval to offer long distance services. We believe that competition for our long distance business will result in better prices and services. We encourage the Commission to review Qwest's application favorably. Another competitor for long distance service will be beneficial for all of NE Montana.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Leslie Messer'.

Leslie Messer
Executive Director
Richland Economic Development

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Cc: Rick Hays-Qwest